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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2015  
INFO RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 0715  
RUEHAA/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 0616  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4954  
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 0648  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 8439  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 8505  
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0438  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1631  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 3907  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 9149  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 2479  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 1053  
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT 0823  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4297  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 8104  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 8306  
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 6500  
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE 3457  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 7495  
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 4063  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC  
RHMMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 3437  
RHMFSS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 5757  
RHMMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RHMFSS/HQ USSOCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 000139

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TAGS: PREL PGOV ETRD ECON NNNP EAGR SOCI IN

SUBJECT: MINISTER OF STATE SHARMA: 123 AGREEMENT

"IMPERATIVE;" SEEK EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS; AND MORE  
AMERICANS AT SATYAGRAHA, PLEASE

Classified By: Ambassador David C. Mulford for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

¶1. (C) Summary. In a January 9 meeting, Minister of State for External Affairs Anand Sharma told the Ambassador:

- India has "too much political capital invested" in the civil-nuclear agreement to allow for 123 Agreement talks to languish, adding a successful 123 conclusion is "imperative;"
- India is committed to concluding a safeguards agreement with the NSG and additional protocols with the IAEA;
- the U.S. and India should seek partnerships to promote educational exchanges;
- rural economic development is a priority for the government;
- he hoped the GOI would be able to find more significant American attendance at the January 29-30 Satyagraha 100th anniversary commemoration, and he welcomed the Ambassadors offer to suggest other potential American invitees; and
- he is considering our invitation to visit the American pavilion at Aero India '07 and perhaps fly on an American plane.

End Summary.

¶ 12. (C) Ambassador called on Minister of State for External Affairs Anand Sharma on January 9 to press for Indian progress on our civil nuclear cooperation initiative negotiations, as well as to seek Sharma's views on next steps in developing a comprehensive bilateral relationship. Sharma agreed that in the wake of Congress' passage of civil-nuclear legislation, while the related 123 Agreement legislation still needs to be finalized, now is the time to turn attention to the broader relationship.

¶ 13. (C) Sharma stated that he hoped the U.S. would push forward on negotiating a 123 Agreement within the next few months. The Ambassador noted that the U.S. was awaiting India's counterproposal and urged the GOI to engage immediately and meaningfully. Sharma described India's presentation to the Nuclear Suppliers Group in October, which he characterized as having gone well, and said India is involved in discussions with the IAEA on Additional Protocols. The Prime Minister and the government are "fully committed," he stressed, adding "Too much political capital has been invested. It's imperative to have a successful conclusion."

Education: Partnerships Best Way Forward

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¶ 14. (C) Regarding next steps in building the bilateral

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relationship, the Ambassador pointed to the growing interest from American universities to be involved in India through programs or exchanges, noting the lack of balance between 76,000 Indian students studying in the U.S. this year, compared to 1500 Americans in India. He cited the small percentage of Americans studying abroad who choose to study in India as an opportunity for future growth. Sharma suggested that best way to begin would be to identify two or three universities on each side and form partnerships for the exchange of students, faculty and research. Partnerships would be a way to avoid Indian anxieties that its universities would have to compete with richer American institutions for faculty and students. The Ambassador referred to the planned visit of Undersecretary Hughes perhaps in March, saying several U.S. university presidents were expected to accompany her to explore possibilities.

¶ 15. (C) The Ambassador expressed hope that the U.S. would be able to assist India in developing its primary education system, which Sharma admitted was an area of concern for the GOI, linking it to India's overall economic progress, particularly in rural areas. The Ambassador urged India to consider liberalizing its micro-credit and rural banking system as a method of accelerating economic growth, which Sharma agreed was desirable, although efforts to do so in the past had been problematic due to scandals and defaults. Rural development had the attention of India's top policymakers, Sharma asserted, who see such growth as a way to relieve pressure over the long run on urban migration.

Satyagraha: More Americans, Please

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¶ 16. (C) Saying that he had heard few Americans had accepted invitations to the Satyagraha 100th anniversary ceremony, the Ambassador offered assistance in helping to identify other potential American invitees. (Note: Satyagraha, or "truth struggle," is the name of the non-violent resistance movement started by Mohandas Gandhi in South Africa in 1906, which Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., often cited as an inspiration for his civil rights campaign. The 100th anniversary commemoration is headed by India's Congress Party, with Sonia Gandhi personally heading the committee organizing the event, and Sharma as the committee's convener. It will take place

January 29-30, with a guest list that includes Nobel laureates Desmond Tutu, Lech Walesa, Mohammed Younis, and other eminent persons from 82 countries. End note.) Sharma confirmed that only two Americans have accepted invitations, one of them being Gene Sharp. He welcomed suggestions for other U.S. guests; post provided a short list following the meeting. Sharma said he hoped more Americans would attend, adding that an absence of appropriate American presence would be unfortunate given the political attention that the GOI is paying to the Satyagraha anniversary.

Sharma Considering Attending Aero India

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¶7. (C) The Ambassador described the commitment the USG and U.S. industry have put into making this year's Aero India event the largest ever U.S. presence for the air show. The Ambassador reconfirmed the invitation to Sharma to ride on a U.S. plane at the show. Sharma said he was considering attending.

MULFORD